

Geneva, Switzerland

7th February, 2009

**Press Statement: Niger Delta Civil Society Organisations Demands
Demilitarisation and Respect for Minority Rights at the U.N.**

The Universal Periodic Review of Nigeria takes place on Monday 9th February, 2009 at the United Nations in Geneva against the backdrop of the several commitments and pledges which Nigeria has made to the international community including upholding all her obligations under the various international human rights instruments which the country has signed.

Representatives of nationality groups and non governmental organisations from the Niger Delta attending the 4th session of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council has this week called on the United Nations Human Rights Council to put these commitments and pledges of Nigeria to test by calling on the Federal government to end the current militarization with impunity and unaccountability that is going on in the Niger Delta.

The group had alleged that the militarization has resulted in indiscriminate killing of innocent citizens, arbitrary arrests and rape of women which is in contravention of Nigeria's obligations under several human rights instruments including the international covenant on civil and political rights, the Convention against Torture and CEDAW.

The delegates further urged states to take Nigeria to task on its treatment of the mosaic of minority and indigenous communities that straddle the length and breadth of the Niger Delta River where decades of gas flaring and unsustainable oil exploitation had imperilled the environment and destroyed natural livelihood support systems.

The delegates stressed that as a step forward, the Nigeria government should seize the opportunity of the review to make commitments to the setting up of a National Minorities Commission to provide an institutional framework for addressing the problems of minorities and indigenous communities in the Niger Delta and the country at large.

Given that the report (see http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session4/NG/A_HRC_WG6_4_NGA_1_E.pdf) of the Nigeria government submitted to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is marked by certain obvious gaps, the group stressed that the review process offers Nigeria the opportunity to take a marked and critical departure from this style that had increased the crisis of human rights in Nigeria and do some soul searching to reprieve itself of most of the wrongs it has committed against Niger delta communities thereby strengthening its image in the process as a nation that supports the liberties of its citizens.

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